



Just for Parents

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Gathering the Public's Input

Meetings bring out passion, dedication for students

Last month I had the privilege of representing the department at three public meetings throughout the state to collect input on Florida's math and English language arts standards. It was great to see so many education professionals, parents and community members make the effort to attend and share their viewpoints.



Some attendees made comments for or against the standards in general, and some voiced detailed concerns relating to specific standards. During the more than 13 hours of public meeting discussion, one message was loud and clear: Floridians care about their students.

For those who could not attend in person, the department also accepted feedback via the web and email. When our public comment period closed at the end of October, we had received more than 19,000 comments. If you are one of the thousands of Floridians who contributed to this important review, I thank you for adding your voice to this conversation. I assure you that we take your input seriously and will use all feedback thoughtfully to ensure Florida has the best math and English language arts standards possible.

Any changes we recommend to strengthen the standards will be presented to the State Board of Education for formal adoption. If you have questions or comments about other aspects of Florida's education system, contact me at Commissioner@fldoe.org. Thank you for all you do to prepare and support your student during this transition to higher expectations and a stronger foundation for success in college, career and life.

Pam Stewart, Commissioner of Education



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Department's Video Contest Features Involved Parents

Governor Scott proclaimed November Parental Involvement in Education Month. To highlight the important role parents play in their children's academic success, the Florida Department of Education is hosting a [video contest for parents](#).

All Florida parents are encouraged to participate. Do you volunteer in your child's classroom, create learning activities at home or come up with creative ways to stay involved? These are just a few ideas for your video entry.

Submissions must be no longer than **45 seconds** and convey how you stay involved and engaged in your child's education. Submit your video entry by tweeting the video (or video link) to [@educationfl](#) or posting the video on the department's [Facebook page](#) by Friday, November 22, 2013. Remember, videos do not have to be professional quality.

If you have any questions or concerns, email communicationsoffice@fldoe.org.

*"We know that a parent's high expectations and positive contributions lay the foundation for their child's academic achievement and success later in life."
- Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart.*

Take the Parental Involvement Month Pledge

As a parent, guardian, or caring adult, I hereby give my pledge to support a high-quality education for all of Florida's students to the best of my ability.

I have high expectations for my child and all of Florida's children to succeed in school and in life.

I pledge to stay involved, serve as a positive role model, and maintain open communication with my child's teacher and school to ensure education remains a top priority in my household.

I understand that it is my responsibility to stay informed and involved in all aspects of my child's education.

Education is the key to success, and I will do everything I can to nurture my child's ability to learn.

November is Parental Involvement Month



When schools and families work together to support learning, students succeed not just in school, but throughout life. Parental Involvement Month is celebrated throughout November to recognize the connection parents and families have in their children's education.

Parents and families play an important role in creating an environment that fosters lifelong learning. Parent's high expectations and positive contributions lay the foundation for their child's academic achievement and success later in life.

During the month, parents, grandparents, guardians and extended families are encouraged to be involved in their child's education throughout the year.

Schools and families must mutually support each other to ensure children succeed. Supportive parents involved in their children's studies and schools are

fundamental to academic success.

Consider boosting your efforts by getting involved, staying informed and continuing to make your child's education a top priority. Research on parent involvement shows that regardless of family income or background, students with involved parents are more likely to succeed on a number of fronts.

- Higher grades, test scores and graduation rates
- Better school attendance
- Increased motivation and self-esteem
- Lower rates of suspension
- Decreased use of drugs and alcohol
- Fewer instances of violent behavior

Involved families foster home environments where children feel valued and receive regular messages on the importance of education.

Parental Involvement Tips

Establish a daily family routine.

Provide adequate time as well as a quiet place for your child to study. Assign age-appropriate responsibility for daily household chores. Try to eat dinner together as often as possible and be firm about sticking to a set bedtime.

Monitor out-of-school activities.

Arrange for supervised after-school care for younger children. Set limits on TV watching and computer time. Check up on children when you are not home.

Express high, but realistic expectations for achievement.

Set age-appropriate goals and standards for your child. Recognize and encourage special talents, sharing your child's successes with friends and family.

Encourage your child's development and progress in school.

Show interest in what your child is learning in school. Help with homework and engage in discussions about the value of education and career options. Stay in touch with teachers and school staff.

Encourage reading, writing and discussions among family members.

Read and listen to your children read. Talk about what is being read. Encourage your child to write stories and letters to relatives and friends.

For additional ways to get involved in your child's education, visit our [Parental Involvement Activities Calendar 2013](#) and [Parental Involvement](#) webpage.

Florida Math and English Language Arts Standards



As Florida's schools incorporate math and English language arts standards in all grades, classroom instruction will look increasingly different. Parents should expect to see children learning in more collaborative groups.

With more communication among teachers, parents will see their children's subject areas overlap and intertwine among classes.

You can help your children get off to an early start by focusing *now* on the new expectations, some of which are listed below.

More Non-fiction

- Students will be reading more informational and increasingly complex text as they move through the elementary and secondary grades. These texts will not replace classic literature pieces, but enhance literacy in other classes.
- Teachers in all subject areas will increase focus on reading and comprehension.

More Evidence

- Students will be expected to write more, using facts, details and examples to inform, describe and explain.
- In reading, students will be required to make evidence-based claims, analyzing what they read.
- In writing, students will be asked to cite evidence to justify their statements, rather than rely on opinions or personal feelings.

More Complexity

- Students will be expected to read and comprehend increasingly complex texts. Research shows that the complexity of texts used in schools has declined during the past 40 years.

More Speaking /More Listening

- Students will be expected to demonstrate that they can speak and listen effectively.
- Students will be assessed for both speaking *and* listening skills. In the classroom, this means more small-group and whole-class discussions.
- Expect teachers to teach and evaluate students on how well they understand the speaker's points.

You can learn more about Florida's current math and English language arts standards at

<http://www.cpalms.org/Public/search/Standard>.

A Teacher's Perspective on Parental Involvement

By Dorina Sackman, 2014 Florida Department of Education/Macy's Teacher of the Year

Florida's At the beginning of each school year, I let my students' parents know how I feel about educating their children. I tell them that I am happy to make my classroom a second home for students and that I am truly passionate about their success. However, after 15 years in the classroom, I have come to the realization that teachers cannot do it alone.

It is imperative that we increase family/parent involvement in the educational goals of our students. Teachers across our state are working with their schools to increase the amount of year-round community engagement, including adding community service in the curriculum, building partners in education, volunteering, developing education programs for our parents, incorporating after school programs with parent participation, and/or schools partaking in community events.

But we need your help in this journey. I want parents to see their child's school as a cornerstone of our community, ensuring the empowerment of young minds.

So the question is, "Are you ready to get involved?" Here are five simple ways to start off building a culture of community in your child's school.

1. Send a quick email to your child's teachers, letting them know you are interested in your child's performance at school. Let teachers know the best

way and times to reach you and include updated contact information.

2. Attend parent/teacher conferences when scheduled. If you can't attend in person, ask about other ways to speak with your child's teachers. With new technology, from Skype to video conferencing, there are many ways we, as teachers, can work with your schedule.

3. Take a few minutes each day to check your child's planner or folder. This is the best form of communication with a teacher and allows the teacher to see if you are checking your child's work and homework.

4. Volunteer once this month. There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer in your child's school. Even if you volunteer only once this month, it is a reflection of your commitment to your child's education. Be careful, you might actually LOVE it and get further involved!

5. Commit to attending this month's school/parent advisory committee meeting. These meetings are filled with vital information for you and your child. Why not attend your school meeting this month and share the information with other parents!

Although it seems very simple, these five things are the first steps in taking the leap to assist teachers in meeting the needs of your child. I believe "incremental is monumental" and this month is a great time to start!



About the Author:

Dorina Sackman is the 2014 Florida Department of Education/Macy's Teacher of the Year. She is currently serving as the Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education, touring the state to spread the word about educational opportunities and challenges in Florida.

Previously, Dorina taught eighth grade English language arts at Westridge Middle School in Orange County.

She is fluent in five languages and specializes in working with students learning English.